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ABSTRACT

In this study, 484 dissertations written from 1976 to 1985 were reviewed to determine the content of curriculum dissertations and the methodology employed. "Dissertation Abstracts International" was the data source for dissertations. Sixteen categories emerged as appropriate for classifying the content foci of the studies. Descriptions and examples for each category are provided. When the larger topics are utilized, 43 percent of the dissertations addressed curriculum making, 11 percent dealt with curriculum in the classroom, 20 percent focused on curricular components, and 8 percent concerned forces bearing on curriculum. No significant trends appeared when the first half of the period was compared with the second half. In almost two-thirds of the studies, either no level of schooling was identified or the K-12 range was investigated. Twelve categories of methodology were revealed in the analysis. The most common approach involved a questionnaire or survey; nearly one-third of the studies employed this device as a major data collection technique. Over the 10-year period under consideration, 104 institutions granted degrees to those conducting curriculum research for their dissertations. A table lists the 33 institutions that graduated at least 5 such persons from 1976-1985. (MLF)

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An Analysis of Curriculum Dissertations: 1976-1985

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For some time, workers in the curriculum field have been conscious that their efforts often take them in disparate directions. Macdonald (1976), Pinar (1981), and Huenecke (1982) have been among those who have identified differences based on interest and focus. While these and other categories have been applied to curriculum writings that appear in journals or yearbooks, until recently little attention has been given to the work of the incipient scholars of the field, as found in their dissertations.

The purpose of this study is to determine the focus (content) of curriculum dissertations and the methodology employed over a 10-year period, beginning with the year Macdonald's paper was delivered.

Examination of dissertations must be tempered with caution. By their very nature, dissertations are limited in scope. They are a means to an end, rather than an end themselves. They are rarely funded and never longitudinal. They do not represent all

EA 019 961

that a student is capable of doing, but it must be assumed that they are representative of a student's efforts on three bases: the student must have knowledge of the topic, interest in the topic, and the ability to use the specified methodology.

Terms are so often used idiosyncratically in curriculum writing, attention must be given to the following definitions which underlie the conceptualization of this paper:

Curriculum: a learning environment.

A curriculum: a program of study specifically planned to achieve designated ends.

Curricular components: purpose, content, instructional approach, organization, and evaluation.

Translation has been made throughout this investigation so that "a curriculum," for example, carries a consistent meaning, even if "program" or "course" was used synonymously in a dissertation. Similarly, classification of dissertations was based on meaning rather than language.

Dissertation Abstracts International was the data source for dissertations. All dissertations dealing with matters relating to the curricular components were considered. Dissertations whose major purpose was the development or evaluation of a specific curriculum per se were not included. A total of 484 dissertations met the criteria for inclusion in this review.

Four questions were examined: What were the content foci of the dissertations? What levels of schooling were involved? What

types of methodology were utilized? At what institutions were the studies conducted?

What Were the Content Foci of the Dissertations?

Sixteen categories emerged as appropriate for classifying the content foci of the studies. Descriptions and examples for each category follow.

Curriculum change involves the context and conditions under which new or proposed curricula are conceived and accepted.

"A Case Study of the Process of Curriculum Change in a National League for Nursing Accredited School of Nursing, 1958-1968," Sheila Pringle (1979, Temple University).

In this study, the process of curriculum change was described from the point of conception up to the point of implementation. Comparisons of what was observed were made with what was found in the literature. It was concluded that the order, onset, and completion of tasks did not support what was in the literature.

"Case Study of a Laboratory High School: Ethnography of School Culture and the Curriculum Change Process," Anne Nuerneberger (1983, Stanford University).

Using an approach from cultural anthropology, this study examined why certain patterns of cultural elements appear and persist and how they relate to curriculum change. Faculty and students were studied in the context of the

4

school. Core cultural elements were delineated which indicated there was an atmosphere of caring in the school. Curriculum change was seen as slow and incremental.

Curriculum development is concerned with the decisions, organization, and procedures for making or revising a curriculum.

"Toward a Conceptual Model for Planning the Elementary School Curriculum in Saudi Arabia," Ibrahim Fallatah (1980, University of Wisconsin at Madison).

Based on a survey of elementary teachers and an examination of instructional materials, a model of curriculum planning was proposed. It was found that the model was most successful if (a) a full array of personnel was included--teachers, professors, local religious and professional leaders, and educated parents, (b) inservice programs were offered to those who were to implement curriculum, and (c) budget, facilities, and personnel were all sufficient.

"A Testing of the Naturalistic Model of Curriculum Development," Richard Reeser (1980, Case Western Reserve University).

Decker Walker's naturalistic model of curriculum development was tested using records from a curriculum revision project that had occurred in 1952 in the medical school of the university. The model showed promise in application, although some aspects of the model could not be tested due to the unavailability of data; it was proposed that the model be tested as an ongoing project.

• Curriculum planning deals with decisions about curriculum components (i.e., purpose, content, instructional approach, organization, and evaluation).

"Curriculum Planning Toward Pupil-Teacher Planning," Michael Codd (1981, State University of New York at Buffalo).

An examination was undertaken of the extent to which elementary teachers incorporated pupil-teacher planning into curriculum planning. The researcher found that teachers did plan for pupil-teacher planning, especially in the middle grades, for both academic and nonacademic areas.

"An Analysis of the Literature in Pupil-Teacher Planning and the Literature on Leadership, 1935-1979: The Synthesis of an Administrative Model to Facilitate Pupil-Teacher Planning as a Component of Curriculum Planning," Daniel Hickman (1981, State University of New York at Buffalo).

A 19-point model for pupil-teacher planning was synthesized to include characteristics common to pupil-teacher planning and leadership. It was recommended that curriculum planning could be improved through supervision that incorporated the 19-point model.

Curriculum decision-making focuses on the tasks and responsibilities necessary for curriculum planning (e.g., arranging release time for teachers to work on curriculum committees).

"A Syntactic Analysis of the Critical Work Performance

of Curriculum Specialists in Pennsylvania Public Schools Using the Flanagan Critical Incident Technique," Sharron Nelson (1979, University of Pittsburgh).

This study sought to identify and classify the work of curriculum specialists who work in Pennsylvania public schools. Seven categories for work were identified: administration of the instructional program, management of instructional materials, curriculum management, staff training, interaction with students, teacher supervision, and interaction with outside agencies.

Curriculum implementation addresses issues of how a new or revised curriculum is put into place in the classroom.

"A Teacher Strike and a Secondary School Curriculum," Arthur Golden (1981, University of Southern California).

Using ethnographic techniques, the impact of a teacher strike on curriculum was examined. Findings revealed, in part, that the extent to which a board-adopted curriculum was implemented varied according to the qualifications of the substitute teacher, the subject area, and the degree of student cooperation.

"Curriculum Policies and Classroom Practice: An Illuminative Study of Sierra Leone Primary Curriculum," Theresa Sengova (1982, University of Wisconsin at Madison).

In this study, the translation of national policies into formal school curriculum and then into classroom practices

was investigated. Among the findings were the following: (a) the implementation of formal curriculum at the classroom level is determined no so much by national policy as by the materials available, and (b) teachers tend to adopt curriculum to specific content; this can be identified as a private curriculum. It was recommended that the concept of private curriculum be studied further.

Curriculum-in-use concerns what is offered or what is learned in the classroom as this does not apply to a new or revised curriculum.

"An Analysis of the Relationships Among Intended Curriculum, In-Use Curriculum, and Students' Cognitive Structure Associated with an Ecology Unit," Elias Adeniyi (1983, University of Wisconsin at Madison).

In an attempt to compare the intended curriculum of Nigeria and the actual curriculum, classroom instruction, materials, lesson plans, and student examinations were studied. Interviews and essay tests were used to gather information also. Differences between the two curricula were found in relation to philosophy and approach to teaching, use of specific activities, conceptual/propositional content, and sequencing. Exams indicated that less than half of the students learned most of the intended curriculum but more than 80% repeated the in-use curriculum in their answers.

Goals/Objectives/Plans deals with curriculum components as they are conceived and/or written prior to instruction.

"Relationship Between Expressed Curriculum Priorities and Actual Priorities at Selected Children's Centers in Pinellas County, Florida," Kathryn Watson (1980, University of Florida).

This study examined the expressed curriculum priorities of the directors of two preschool settings and compared these with the daily activities at the settings. The priorities were found to be similar in both settings and were significantly related to the actual occurrences at the center.

Curriculum content, one of the curriculum components, is what is taught. It includes the hidden curriculum.

"Cultural Reproduction Via the Hidden Curriculum," Lynne Hannay (1984, Ohio State University).

Naturalistic methodology was used in this study to determine what students were learning from the hidden curriculum in a sophomore social studies class. It was found that students were learning working class attitudes toward power and authority, social stratification, and the work ethic, generally with their tacit agreement. It was concluded, in part, that the hidden curriculum was not really very hidden.

Curriculum materials involves instructional resources as they relate to the components of curriculum.

"Learner Preferences for Psychological Attributes of Curriculum Materials," John Langrehr (1980, Ohio State University).

This study set out to identify the nature and number of psychological attributes that are in curriculum materials as perceived by high school students. To that end an instrument was developed consisting of pictures of curriculum materials as similar as possible, except for such factors as degree of abstraction, ambiguity, and degree of structure. As different types of students preferred different types of materials, it was suggested that additional studies be undertaken to pursue this line of inquiry.

Curriculum design involves the interrelationships of curriculum components (i.e., purpose, content, instructional approach, organization, evaluation).

"Student Enrollment Decline: Its Impact and Alternatives for the High School Curriculum," Barbara Martin (1980, Michigan State University).

Based on student enrollment projections for a secondary school, four designs were promulgated: a standardized curriculum, a core curriculum, a modified magnet plan, and an interdisciplinary model. Using simulation to evaluate each model on the basis of student need, number of faculty,

and faculty and community reaction, it was found that the modified magnet plan could best accommodate the student body and meet a variety of needs.

The curriculum field looks at persons, events, or ideas that have influenced thinking about curriculum.

"The Identification and Analysis of the Major Curriculum Ideas of James B. Macdonald," Alexander Ohashiegbula (1978, Kent State University).

More than 80 articles were analyzed to determine the major questions and key elements addressed by Macdonald. A synthesis and interpretation of his work was offered that highlighted his major ideas.

"Reconceptual Inquiry as an Alternative Mode of Curriculum Theory and Practice: A Critical Study," Karen Mazza (1980, Boston University).

Using an interpretive methodology, this study sought to (a) understand the reconceptualist critique of traditionalist curriculum theory, (b) inquire how the traditions upon which reconceptualists draw can contribute to other ways of thinking about curriculum, and (c) evaluate the degree to which reconceptualist thinking has developed alternatives to traditional approaches.

Influences on curriculum focuses on the forces that shape curriculum.

"Factors Influencing Introduction of a Current

Environmental Topic into Curriculum," Harriett Stubbs (1982, University of Minnesota).

This study attempted to discover whether there were differences between teachers who taught about acid rain in the ongoing curriculum and those who did not. While a number of personal factors did not discriminate between the two groups, teachers who included environment, energy, and current events in their curriculum and who were receptive to change as measured by an attitude survey were more likely to introduce acid rain into their curriculum.

Curriculum policy-making addresses official plans and decisions affecting curriculum.

"Curriculum Policy-making in Ontario: A Case Study of the Policy Formulation Process Leading to the Establishment of the Secondary Education Review Project," Peter Baker (1985, University of Toronto).

In order to understand the decisions that led to the development of the Secondary Education Review Project, the annual education policy documents produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education were analyzed. It was found, in part, that public demand for more rigorous secondary education influenced the initiation of the SERP.

Curriculum evaluation deals with ways of making judgments about curriculum.

"Curriculum Analysis: The Program Review Process," Laina Newman (1981, Arizona State University).

This study set out to validate a four-step procedure for analyzing curriculum, the Program Review Process. It was found that teachers and administrators agreed about the importance of the process, which appeared to be an effective approach for proposing and initiating changes in curriculum.

"The Development of a Categorical Model to Evaluate Inservice Education Programs," Peggy Leahy (1981, Miami University).

Superintendents, central office personnel, principals, and teachers were surveyed to determine their perceptions as to the information deemed critical in the evaluation of inservice programs. Four dimensions were included: planning, design, implementation, and evaluation.

Curriculum leaders deals with characteristics of those making curriculum decisions and the relationship of those characteristics to curriculum decision-making.

"The Role of the Teacher in Curriculum Development and Evaluation," Mamdouh El-Sadek (1982, New York University).

This study examined teachers' views on several points related to the Tyler rationale. Teachers were student centered when considering all the points on the rationale. Because their views were related to their preparation and experience with curriculum development, it was recommended that inservice programs focus on curriculum development and that teachers play a greater role in curriculum decision-making.

"The Relationship Between Selected Variables of Primary Headteachers and Their Views on Curriculum Guidelines in Fiji," Aminand Sundor (1985, Columbia University Teachers College).

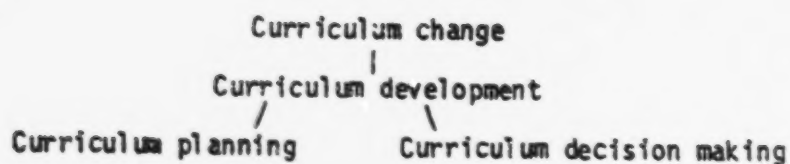
This study sought to determine whether there is a relationship between school size, academic qualifications, teacher training, teaching experience, headteachership, and the amount of time spent on various educational tasks and the views of primary headteachers on curriculum guides. A significant difference was observed only in the relationship between school size and the views of the teachers on organization and methods of curriculum guides.

Curriculum system refers to a conception of curriculum based on an input-output model.

"The School as a Curriculum System: A Concept and a Model," Catherine Noonan (1979, Columbia University Teachers College).

"The purpose of this study was to develop and test the concept of a school as a dynamic curricular system composed of elements in constant interaction.

Several of these categories are closely related and can be clustered to identify a larger topic. For example the following four categories all deal with how curriculum is made.



The next two deal with curriculum in the classroom:

Curriculum-in-use

Curriculum implementation

The following four categories deal with the components of curriculum:

Goals/objectives/plans

Content

Materials

Design

The categories below address forces bearing on curriculum:

Influences on curriculum

Curriculum policy making

Table 1 identifies the percentage of the 484 curriculum dissertations from 1976-1985 in each category. When the larger topics are utilized, it can be seen that 43% of the dissertations addressed curriculum making, 11% dealt with curriculum in the classroom, 20% focused on curricular components, and 8% concerned forces bearing on curriculum. No significant trends appeared when the first half of the period was compared with the second half.

Table 1

Content Focus of Curriculum Dissertations

Focus	1976-1980	1981-1985	Overall
Curriculum change	4%	3%	4%
Curriculum development	17%	12%	15%
Curriculum planning	6%	10%	7%
Curriculum decision making	15%	19%	17%
Curriculum implementation	7%	10%	8%
Curriculum-in-use	2%	3%	3%
Goals/objectives/plans	5%	3%	4%
Curriculum content	13%	8%	11%
Curriculum materials	2%	0%	1%
Curriculum design	3%	4%	4%
Curriculum field	8%	10%	9%
Influences on curriculum	6%	9%	7%
Curriculum policy making	1%	1%	1%
Curriculum evaluation	6%	4%	5%
Curriculum leaders	2%	3%	3%
Curriculum system	2%	0%	1%
Other	1%	1%	1%

Note. Percentages may not add up exactly due to rounding.

What Levels of Schooling Were Involved?

In almost two-thirds of the studies, either no level of schooling was identified or the K-12 range was investigated. In the 166 dissertations specifying specific educational level, 27% focused on students in early childhood programs or in the primary grades, 7% addressed the middle grades, 25% the secondary level, and 42% higher or adult education. Because these percentages refer to only one-third of the studies, it can be said that, overall, two-thirds of the studies related to a wide range of educational levels, 9% to young children, 8% to high school students, and 13% to postsecondary education.

What Types of Methodology Were Utilized?

Twelve categories of methodology were revealed in the analysis, as described in Table 2. By far, the most common approach involved a questionnaire or survey; nearly one-third of the studies employed this device as a major data collection technique.

As with the content foci, methodologies can be grouped for additional examination. Three categories involve a careful description of what is (or was): historical studies, document analysis, and case studies. In combination, these comprise the approach used in 22% of the studies.

Three methodologies strive for understanding. They are criticism, language or content analysis/interpretation, and

Table 2
Methodology of Curriculum Dissertations

Focus	1976-1980	1981-1985	Overall
Questionnaire	29%	29%	29%
Interview	4%	5%	5%
Questionnaire and interview	4%	3%	3%
Historical	6%	3%	5%
Document analysis	10%	10%	10%
Case study	8%	7%	7%
Criticism	1%	1%	1%
Language or content analysis/ interpretation	8%	11%	9%
Naturalistic/ethnographic	6%	10%	7%
Model building	13%	12%	12%
Development/validation	6%	6%	5%
Application of an instrument	4%	2%	3%
Other	2%	3%	2%

Note. Percentages may not add up exactly due to rounding.

naturalistic/ethnography. Seventeen percent of the studies employed these methods.

The classification of model building, accounting for 12% of the dissertations, included studies in which the basic goal was to develop a framework, paradigm, or theoretical construct.

In 5% of the studies the approach involved the development or validation of an instrument. The use of an existing, validated instrument was the major methodology in only 3% of the studies.

No significant trends emerged when the first half of the period was compared with the second half.

At What Institutions Was the Research Conducted?

Over the 10-year period under consideration, 104 institutions granted degrees to those conducting curriculum research for their dissertations. Table 3 lists those institutions that graduated at least five such persons from 1976-1985.

Conclusion

In this study, 484 dissertations written from 1976 to 1985 were reviewed. The overriding concern of these studies was: How do you make a curriculum? This is perhaps the most traditional of all curriculum concerns. Although it is a question that has been asked for a century, it apparently requires more research energies. More than 3 out of 10 dissertations utilized questionnaires or surveys developed specifically for the study.

Table 3

Universities at Which Curriculum Dissertations Were Undertaken

University	Number of Dissertations
State University of New York at Buffalo	48
Teachers College, Columbia University	22
University of Wisconsin at Madison	20
Ohio State University	15
University of Southern California	14
University of Texas at Austin	14
Temple University	13
University of Maryland	12
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	12
University of Pittsburgh	12
Michigan State University	11
Northern Illinois University	10
Stanford University	10
University of Georgia	10
University of Pennsylvania	10
Kent State University	9
University of Massachusetts	9
University of Toronto	9
University of Virginia	9
Wayne State University	9
Indiana University	8
University of Kansas	7
Case Western Reserve University	6
George Peabody College, Vanderbilt University	6
Georgia State University	6
University of California at Los Angeles	6
University of Minnesota	6
University of Nebraska at Lincoln	5
Pennsylvania State University	5
State University of New York at Albany	5
University of Chicago	5
University of Colorado at Boulder	5
University of Connecticut	5

It can be said, then, that description was the norm and curriculum making the content.

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